

Bodine Castle
43-16 Vernon Boulevard
Long Island City
New York
Queens County
New York

HABS No. NY-5465

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5465

BODINE CASTLE

Address: 43-16 Vernon Boulevard, Long Island City, New York,
Queens County, New York.

Present Owner: The building was demolished in 1966. Consolidated
Edison Company owns the site.

Statement of
Significance: Located in the once-fashionable Ravenswood area, the
Bodine Castle was typical of the modestly-scaled
romantic villas that formerly surrounded New York.
Until its destruction in 1966, the gothic revival
house had become almost unique in New York City as an
example of this kind of building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The structure was named
after an owner, John Bodine. The following deed recorded
in Liber 90, page 371, at the Office of the Register of
Deed in Jamaica, Queens, conveyed the property to Bodine:

THIS INDENTURE made the thirty first day of July one
thousand eight hundred and fifty one.

BETWEEN JOHN S. HARRIS Provision Dealer in the City of
New York residing at Long Island Farms in the Town of
Newtown County of Queens and State of New York and
LYDIA A. his wife parties of the first part and JOHN
BODINE Grocer in the City of New York residing at Long
Island Farms aforesaid of the second part;

WITNESSETH that the said parties of the first part for
and in consideration of the sum of twelve thousand dol-
lars lawful money of the United States to them in hand
paid by the said party of the second part at or before
the ensealing and delivery of these presents the receipt
whereof is hereby acknowledged . . .

ALL that certain lot piece or parcel of land situate
lying and being in the Town of Newtown County of Queens
and State of New York being part and parcel of a certain
lot piece or parcel of land known on a map entitled "Map
of land and buildings thereon situate in the Town of
Newtown Queens County and State of New York the property
of the City of New York known as the Long Island Farms
New York February 19 1845 surveyed and laid out by
Edwin Smith Civil engineer and City surveyor which said

map is filed in the office of the comptroller of the City of New York as lot number ten (10) as said lot number ten (10) was granted and conveyed by the Mayor Aldermen and Commonalty of the City of New York to Joseph Harrison by deed dated October first one thousand eight hundred and forty five recorded in Queens County Clerks Office in Liber 67 of conveyances page 133 and by said Joseph Harrison conveyed to John S. Harris and James Robertson and by said James Robertson and wife granted and conveyed to said John S. Harris by deed dated June first one thousand eight hundred and forty eight recorded in Queens County Clerks office in Liber 75 of deed page 403 the said part and parcel of said lot number ten (10) hereby meant and intended to be conveyed fronts on the East River and lies at a distance of two hundred feet northwesterly from the northwesterly side of the Turnpike Road laid down on said map and said piece or parcel of said lot ten (10) hereby meant and intended to be conveyed is bounded northwesterly in front by the East River southeasterly by a line dividing the lot hereby meant and intended to be conveyed from the adjoining land owned by said John S. Harris and division line being parallel with and distant two hundred feet northwesterly from the northwesterly side of said Turnpike Road (as laid down on said map) one hundred and twenty nine feet six inches southwesterly by the division line between lots ten (10) and eleven (11) at a point distant two hundred feet from said Turnpike Road and northeasterly by a line dividing the lot hereby meant and intended to be conveyed from the adjoining land owned by said John S. Harris which said last mentioned dividing is a line parallel with and distant one hundred and twenty nine feet six inches northeasterly from the said division line between lots ten (10) and eleven (11). The said piece or parcel of land hereby meant and intended to be described is marked A on the following diagram.

.....
Together with all and singular the tenements hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging or in any wise appertaining and the reversion and reversions remainder and remainders rents issues and profits thereof;
.....

2. Date of erection: According to popular local tradition, the house was built by a French nobleman after he fled his homeland during the French Revolution.
3. Original plans and construction: The earliest map available which indicates buildings for this area is the "Topographical Map of the Counties of Kings and Queens New-York. From

Surveys under the Direction of H. F. Walling," dated 1869. On this map the Bodine Castle is shown as a square building, with a small rectangular projection at the northwest corner and a smaller projection at the southwest corner. There are also indicated two small structures adjacent to the southwest corner. This map is, however, very small scale and could for that reason be misleading.

The Bodine Castle was built as a suburban residence fronting on the East River opposite Manhattan, in an area called Ravenswood. In 1839 Benjamin F. Thompson wrote in his History of Long Island that

The site [of Ravenswood] is sufficiently elevated to offer the most charming view of the adjacent country . . . Already several houses have been completed and others are in the course of erection.

Peter Ross in A History of Long Island published in 1902 states that Ravenswood "was long . . . the aristocratic section of Long Island City."

4. Alterations and additions: In the Atlas of Queens Co., Long Island, New York, published in 1891, the house is indicated as a masonry building which is in plan identical to that of the stone portion of the house, without the rear (east) frame portion. This rear portion is shown in a photograph dated "before 1900" (See HABS photocopy). This 1891 map also indicates two small structures at the property line along Vernon Boulevard.

5. Important old views:

- a. Photograph of the rear of the building, dated "before 1900." Long Island Collection, Queens Borough Public Library, New York. (See HABS photocopy).
- b. Snapshot of front of building. Long Island Collection, Queens Borough Public Library, New York.

B. Historical Persons Associated with the Building

1. The Bodine Castle was named after John Bodine who purchased the property in 1851. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Long Island City Savings Bank at its founding in 1876 and in the same year was defeated in his bid for the mayoralty of Long Island City.

C. Sources of Information

1. Secondary and published sources:

Atlas of Long Island, New York, From Recent and Actual Surveys

- and Records. New York: Beers, Comstock & Cline, 1873.
- Atlas of Queens Co., Long Island, New York. New York: Chester Wolverton, 1891.
- "Bodine Castle Is No More," Long Island Daily Press, May 20, 1966.
- Brierly, J. Ernest. "Long Ago On Long Island," Long Island Press, January 10, 1965.
- "Bronx Zoo and Con Ed Reject Landmark Status for Building," The New York Times, January 12, 1966, p. 74.
- Historical Collections of the Borough of Queens, New York City. Copied from the Original Reports in the Topographical Bureau of the Borough. Vol. V: Long Island City and Maspeth. W. P. A. Project 465-97-3-20.
- History of Queens County, New York. New York: W. W. Munsell & Co., 1882.
- Map of Long Island City, Queens Co., N. Y. New York: M. Dripps, 1874.
- New York City Guide (American Guide Series). Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration in New York City. New York: Random House, 1939.
- Ross, Peter. A History of Long Island. Vol. I. New York and Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1902.
- Scrapbook of Brooklyn and Long Island. Vols. 52 and 110. (Typewritten. Long Island Historical Society).
- "Stone Castle in Queens is Proposed for a Landmark," The New York Times, February 9, 1966, p. 50.
- Thompson, Benjamin F. History of Long Island. New York: 1839.
- Topographical Map of the Counties of Kings and Queens New-York. New York: H. F. Walling, 1859.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural interest and merit: Located in the once-fashionable Ravenswood area, the Bodine Castle was typical of the modestly-scaled romantic villas that formerly sur-

rounded New York. Until its destruction in 1966, the gothic revival house had become almost unique in New York City as an example of this kind of building.

2. Condition of fabric: Demolished.

B. Description of Exterior

Note: Since the building had been demolished at the time of this report, the following information was obtained from the accompanying HABS photographs of the building.

1. Number of stories: Two stories, with one-story rear portion.
2. Number of bays: West facade is three bays wide.
3. Layout, shape: Irregular in plan.
4. Wall construction, finish and color: Stone with stone and brick tower; rear portion of frame construction.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Modern wood and glass door on north side of rear frame portion.
 - b. Windows: Round-headed and square-headed windows have one-over-one light double-hung sash.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gabled roof covered with shingles and flat roof with stone crenelated parapet.
 - b. Cornice: Stone and wood cornices.
 - c. Tower: Brick and stone tower with crenelated parapet.

C. Description of Interior

Note: Since the building had been demolished at the time of this report, it was not possible to complete this description.

D. Site and Surroundings

1. Orientation: The main (West) facade of the house fronts onto the East River, opposite Manhattan.

Prepared by Diana S. Waite
Architectural Historian
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